



Grant, Mary and Terry, Jane and Crompton, Amanda Jane and Radford, Kathryn A. (2014) Usability and acceptability of stroke-specific vocational rehabilitation: a post-trial interview study. *Clinical Rehabilitation*, 28 (4). pp. 403-415. ISSN 1477-0873

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**Citation:** Clinical Rehabilitation 2014, Vol. 28(4) 403–415 © The Author(s) 2013 Reprints and permissions: sagepub.co.uk/journals Permissions. nav DOI: 10.1177/0269215513506172 cre.sagepub.com

## **Usability and Acceptability of Stroke-Specific Vocational Rehabilitation: a post-trial interview study**

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### **Background:**

The stroke survivor's voice has been identified as a key priority when evaluating rehabilitation interventions. Employer involvement in vocational rehabilitation (VR) studies has been largely absent yet their influence considered important. This study aimed to explore stroke survivors' (SS) and employers' views of the VR intervention received in a feasibility randomised controlled trial.

### **Method:**

Semi-structured interviews with thirteen mild/moderate SS (8 men aged 45-79 mean 61 SD 11.63), 10 in F/T paid employment, 3 P/T volunteers) and six employers postintervention completion, explored acceptability, usefulness and VR implementation issues. Thematic analysis by three independent researchers followed recording and verbatim transcription.

### **Results/Findings:**

The most valued aspects of intervention content were emotional support, provision of stroke specific information and feedback and the planning, implementing and reviewing of a phased return to work. Liaison with the workplace was particularly valued by employers. Continuity, accessibility and knowledge of therapist, individualised intervention and liaison with other services were aspects of intervention delivery commended by SS and employers. However, for some, the timing and duration of the intervention were not appropriate to their needs and this appeared to be linked with stroke severity.

### **Discussion:**

Intervention appeared to influence the timing and success of work return. Opinions were divided on whether the NHS should or could fund this type of intervention and whether employers would be willing to contribute to the costs.

### **Conclusion:**

Trial participants and employers found stroke specific VR useful, acceptable and influential in terms of return to work outcomes. Funding, targeting and implementation require further debate.